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A DEFINITION OF PRIMITIVE ART[1]

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INTRODUCTION

Increasing popular and academic interest in primitive art is producing a need for accurate delineation of the term. When one sees the various exhibitions of and publications on primitive art it is apparent that there is much confusion over its meaning and limitations. It is the aim of this paper to define primitive art in ways meaningful to and operational for both anthropology and history of art.

At Chicago Natural History Museum a Hall of Primitive Art has been opened. On a practical level, it is necessary to select specimens for the new hall from the approximately one-half million material artifacts in the Museum's archaeological and ethnological collections. To do this one must first be able to differentiate between art and non-art, and second, to separate primitive art from other kinds of art.

Primitive art is comprised of art objects made and used by members of primitive societies. First, let us define the terms "art" and "primitive."

ART AND NON-ART

The utility, or function, of art is part of the European concept of art and leads to ethnocentric bias when Europeans consider non-European art. The use to which the maker of an art object intends it to be put delineates the dividing line between so-called "fine" (pure, serious) art and "minor" (applied, decorative, industrial, commercial, etc.) art.

Even a superficial view of European art history suggests that art objects considered to be fine art today, as, for instance, Praxiteles' sculptured marble figure, Hermes with the Infant Dionysus (Gard-

[1] This paper was read in part at the annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association, in November, 1960.

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ner, 1936, fig. 253, p. 170), were made and used as articles of religious paraphernalia. Since medieval times there has been tremendous secularization of European art; the so-called fine arts now have a secular function instead of a religious one. At present most church art is uninspired, almost factory-made work.

It is clear that most, if not all, objects of primitive art suffer diminution of art value if the criterion of creation for art's sake alone be invoked. The following quotations from two writers suggest that the phrase "art for art's sake" implies that art transcends and modifies the utility of the object itself.

Erwin Panofsky (1955, p. 11) says: "It is possible to experience every object, natural or man-made, aesthetically. We do this . . . when we just look at it . . . without relating it, intellectually or emotionally, to anything outside of itself."

Also, he says (loc. cit.) that although natural objects may be experienced aesthetically, a "man-made object . . . either demands or does not demand to be so experienced, for it has . . . an 'intention.' "

Panofsky divides all man-made objects into two classes: (1) works of art, which demand to be experienced aesthetically, and (2) "practical" objects, which do not so demand. Practical artifacts may be divided into: (a) vehicles of communication and (b) tools or apparatuses. All man-made objects have "intent" but only art objects demand to be experienced aesthetically. He says (loc. cit.): "A work of art always has aesthetic significance . . . whether or not it serves some practical purpose, and whether it is good or bad, it demands to be experienced aesthetically." . . . "Where the sphere of practical objects ends, and that of 'art' begins, depends, then, on the 'intention' of the creators." (op. cit., p. 12.)

Panofsky's remarks emphasize the necessity for looking for the way in which aesthetic elements operate within the art object and the way in which the art object operates in its physical context, in contrast to and in addition to the ways in which the object works mechanically and is used socially. In the case of visual art—sculpture, painting, and, partly, architecture—the material form is so structured that the object may be said to function aesthetically, by focussing and channelling visual attention.

The novelist E. M. Forster (1949, p. 31) argues that the phrase "art for art's sake" should be held to mean primarily that "a work of art—whatever else it may be—is a self-contained entity, with a life of its own imposed on it by its creator." He goes on to say

(loc. cit.): "It has internal order. It may have external form. That is how we recognize it." Forster discusses order in various spheres of life and says that perfect order or perfection in daily life, in science, in history, and in political life, is unattainable. However, works of art "are the only objects in the material universe to possess internal order." (op. cit., p. 34.)

This characteristic of art objects—the total design based upon order, consistency, rhythm, harmony and balance of the lines, shapes, masses, colors, light values and textures—enables us to recognize art quality in an item of material culture. When perceived visually, the form of art objects is more ordered, consistent, rhythmic, harmonic and balanced than that of non-art objects.

Art objects, suggests Forster, can be, and often are, "perfect." The absence of perfection in other spheres of life, as in science or in politics, stems from the nature of the elements with which scientists and political leaders have to work. Scientists work in an open-ended universe, of which only fragments are amenable to control. In political life, the notorious intractability of humans destroys elegantly conceived political schemes. In art, however, the artist has much more control over the elements of his creation. He can and does arbitrarily set limits to the projected work, chooses his tools and materials, and not only is able to operate within the conditions of work but is often able to create those very conditions. In the case of visual art, and especially in the more ephemeral arts of dance and music, the art object is intended to produce a specific effect, often sharply limited in time and space. A scientific or political system is of little importance unless it can persist and unless it will be valid under varying conditions.

The characteristic of an artifact which makes it recognizable as art is the aesthetic organization of its visible form. Both Panofsky and Forster emphasize the intention of the artist to make artifacts that will be aesthetically important. The artist thus works purposefully and consciously to achieve aesthetic organization of a work of art. However, let us now consider *why* art is made, by asking, what is it that art *does?*

Art provides one way of presenting symbols for use in the social life of man, and of fixing in visible and persisting form otherwise intangible and transient images, ideas and events. In visual arts, persistence of art objects, barring purposeful destruction of the objects, is limited only by the durability of the materials out of which the object is made. In music and dance, the art object, for instance,

FIG. 108. Hanger made of antlers of a deer, *Cervus* (*Rusa*) *philippinus*; early 20th century. Apayao, Luzon, Philippine Islands. Height 11½ inches. CNHM Cat. No. 109499.

a performance, may persist only as long as the performance lasts. But the art quality—the harmony, repetition, contrast, and rhythm —both of durable and of transient art, helps fix the symbols in the minds and memories of onlookers, at the moment of presentation, by contrasting these symbols with the everyday round of life and work. Art as an important part of ceremonial is a conscious and determined effort to make important symbols visible and permanent.

FIG. 109. Hanger, carved wood; early 20th century. Apayao, Luzon, Philippine Islands. Height 13 inches. CNHM Cat. No. 109428.

It is possible to distinguish art from non-art on two levels. First, by looking to form alone and with no specific knowledge of the life of the people, we may seek evidence of design and composition for visual appeal. At a second and deeper level, we seek to know the artist's intent, function and meaning, using knowledge of the culture and the society, in order to see how much of the total function of the object is involved with visual appeal. Reference to form alone, as in undocumented museum specimens, enables us to make a judgment

as to whether there is *any* art quality present; reference to intent, function and meaning enables us to assess the amount of that quality present in a given art object. Art quality can be best measured

FIG. 110. Effigy hanger, carved and painted wood; early 20th century. Berlin Harbor, New Guinea. Height 18½ inches. CNHM Cat. No. 140040.

when we know the artist's intent, and the meaning and function of a work of art.

Figures 108–110 show three artifacts, of similar mechanical function, which served as hangers from which articles could be suspended. Figure 108 illustrates a set of deer antlers used for this purpose. Figure 109 shows a hanger that was carved from wood. The presence of regular notches on the arms could be construed as decoration, but it could be argued that the notches provided better gripping surfaces for tying objects to the hanger. In the third object, pictured in figure 110, there can be no doubt that art quality is present. The

A B

FIG. 111. A, Adze, shell blade set in wooden handle, rattan binding; early 20th century. Cape Gordon, New Guinea. Height 28¼ inches. CNHM Cat. No. 146990.

B, Ceremonial adze, stone blade, carved wooden handle, sennet binding; early 20th century. Mangaia, Cook Islands, Polynesia. Total height 27 inches. CNHM Cat. No. 111353.

physical form was primarily determined by the maker's intention that a visual image be presented, in combination with the mechanically functional hooks. Two adzes are shown, one in figure 111, A, an undecorated and unelaborated tool, the other in figure 111, B, a visually elaborated symbol.

All these objects were made either as implements or tools, or as decorated or elaborated versions of such devices. The figure illustrated in figure 112 has no mechanical function whatsoever, but is just as "useful" as the others. It was designed and carved to be set up near an Ovimbundu blacksmith's forge to help insure successful prosecution of that craft.

Some of the differences between art and non-art objects are thus readily discernible. Non-art forms (figs. 108, 109, 111, A) are either natural forms not altered by man, or are devoid of decorative or otherwise visually attractive elements. It should be noted that neither development and evolution from non-art to art nor the reverse is implied. All of the objects used to illustrate these differences are contemporary in time, and although drawn from different societies, some could exist side by side in the same group.

SOME IMPLICATIONS OF THE TERM "PRIMITIVE"

The dictionary definition of "primitive" stresses the original, first or root stage of a development. The problem of dealing with contemporary non-civilized peoples must be solved, at least provisionally. Ralph Linton (1958, p. 9) says:

> Actually, there is no culture extant today which can be regarded as primitive. There are cultures of greater or less complexity, and cultures which have a greater or smaller number of features in common with our own, but none of them are ancestral to the high cultures which we call civilizations. The way of life of an American Indian tribe or a group of Polynesian Islanders does not represent a stage through which our own ancestors passed any more than a modern dog represents a stage in the evolution of the elephant. Every existing culture has had its own more or less independent evolutionary history.

Tax (1960, p. 441) objects to the use of the word "primitive," saying that according to the "dictionary meanings of 'primitive,' there are no such groups—or, at least, the peoples that we study are not primitive as [anthropologists] understand the term." Mednick (1960) gives the dictionary definition of "primitive" and notes the disparity between it and anthropological usage of the term.

Linton, Tax and Mednick, basically, objected to the application of the term "primitive," with its meaning of "early," "original," or

FIG. 112. Figure, carved wood, painted red and black. In former days a blacksmith had to kill a victim, whose spirit, it was thought, entered a figure of this kind, which was then made to stand by the forge; early 20th century. Ovimbundu, Elende, Angola, Africa. Height 14¼ inches. CNHM Cat. No. 208338.

"first," to contemporary groups which, very obviously, are not early or original. Linton objected, also, to viewing primitive contemporaries as representing an arrested stage of development through which our civilization passed. However, if, as Linton said above, ". . . every existing culture has had its own more or less independent evolutionary history," it follows that every society, present-day or ancient, whether civilized or "primitive," at the start of its history had a beginning stage which can be called, without equivocation, "primitive."

Redfield's characterization (1953, pp. 6–14, 22) of primitive society as a base out of which civilization may develop, presents a social typology—an ideal primitive society and an ideal civilization. It would be possible to view a given civilized society as having developed from its primitive beginning to its condition of civilization. Also, one could measure degrees of primitiveness, most at the beginning, less with more development, until at some point the society could be called civilized. We could refer to all degrees of primitiveness as primitive, and to all degrees of civilization as civilized. We never have the first stage of primitiveness available for study and probably we never shall. Therefore, to reserve the term "primitive" for application only to such beginnings seems wrong. If it is necessary to have such a term, "primeval" could be used to refer to the actual beginning. Mednick's statement (1960, p. 444) that Tylor and the British Evolutionists used "primitive" to refer to "that long-gone *original* population of mankind about whom one could only speculate" should remind us that we can use the word "primitive" as though it means "pertaining to" the original stage, as well as using it to mean "original." Indeed, a dictionary definition of the word gives both meanings: "1. of, or pertaining to the beginning," etc., and "3. original, first," etc.

For example, to refer to the art of Melanesia as primitive art, although our knowledge of Melanesian societies is almost completely ethnological and extends back only about one hundred years, implies that we have speculated about the nature of the antecedents of contemporary Melanesian societies and have judged the recent societies to be more similar to the ideal type of primitive society than to an ideal type of civilized society. By and large, Melanesian societies of today can be described in terms of Redfield's characteristics of primitive societies rather than those of civilized ones, in spite of the fact that they are much changed as a result of contact with Europeans, and have had long (but unknown) histories. Also, in

the absence of archaeological knowledge of Melanesia, we can only speculate about the culture history of specific Melanesian societies.

Thus, on the basis of present knowledge, it is not unrealistic or impractical to view Melanesian societies as primitive, in the sense that they have not been and still are not civilized, and also in the sense that as far as anyone knows they have not changed much from the actual primitive beginning. Future archaeology could show that the first Melanesian societies, of thousands of years ago, were smaller, more isolated, etc., than the present ones, and we could then measure the change; but it is theoretically possible (although improbable) that earlier Melanesian societies were *less* primitive in social organization, which could be the case if they were formed by Indonesian or mainland Southeast Asian migrants overrunning and combining with Australoid groups in the area.

Art historians sometimes refer to paintings of the twelfth, thirteenth, and early fourteenth centuries in Italy as primitive Italian paintings; that is, this period is considered an early stage of the Renaissance. Other painting styles existed in Italy prior to that period, for instance, Byzantine and Roman, but these are not considered to be part of the Renaissance.

Thus it can be seen in art historians' use of "primitive" that the frame of reference is important. For the historian of the art of the Renaissance, the twelfth century is a beginning stage, and therefore primitive. Note, however, the inclusion of almost three centuries as a beginning stage! For an anthropological investigator of art, studying a worldwide range of society from all ages, the frame of reference must be universally applicable.

Gerbrands (1957) devotes a whole chapter to an attempt to designate for primitive art a term which applies to "the art of the autochthonous population of Negro-Africa, Australia, the Pacific area, and certain forms of art in America, Asia and Indonesia." (op. cit., p. 9.) As a working term he proposes the name, "non-European art." He (op. cit., pp. 11–12) has several objections to the use of "primitive": (1) that chronological priority is implied; (2) that "primitive" has connotations of crudeness or clumsiness; (3) that recent and present-day societies labeled "primitive" are thought of as arrested stages in the development of European culture. Also, and confusingly, in history of art, (4) certain pre-Renaissance art styles are called primitive, for example, Flemish or Italian primitives; and (5) works of certain modern painters, for example, Henri Rousseau, are called primitive. Because of these meanings and con-

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notations, and because of the several confusing ways in which "primitive" is used, Gerbrands suggests the name non-European art. This term leaves much to be desired. Gerbrands would exclude from this field of study European Paleolithic art, a body of material which could most appropriately be called primitive art. He says (op. cit., p. 11): "*Primitive* can certainly be used to indicate the initial stage of human culture as such, but then it must be understood as referring to the culture of Paleolithic man, which does indeed, as far as we know at present, represent the earliest phase in cultural development."

Another name suggested as an alternative for primitive art is ethnological art. An argument for this name was given by Haselberger (1961, pp. 341, 342).[3] A major objection to the name is the exclusion of archaeologically recovered art from consideration as primitive art. Although archaeological research methods are different from those used in ethnology, and although different kinds of materials and knowledge about them are collected in the two disciplines, it does not follow that the art or the society studied differs in any significant way. Thus, to arbitrarily exclude an archaeological dimension from the study of primitive art would mean that the study would lack time depth. This would exclude possibilities for study of change in art.

Gerbrands limits his study to the art of indigenous peoples of Negro Africa, Australia, the Pacific Islands, and certain forms of art in America, Asia and Indonesia. From Asia and Indonesia he excludes Buddhist and Hindu art of South, Southeast and East Asia, Mohammedan art, and also, rather anticlimactically, Japanese prints. The archaeological art of America he considers "a dubious case" (op. cit., p. 137), as well he might, for as a category it contains the art of civilized, pre-civilized and non-civilized societies.

Gerbrands' non-European art is a smaller category than that being proposed here as primitive art. Non-European art seems to include only the art of ethnologically known peoples; primitive art, as defined herein, includes, in addition, the art of archaeologically known peoples. Gerbrands' conclusion is that neither form nor content of non-European art can be subsumed under a single principle of similarity. He (op. cit., p. 138) cites Leonhard Adam (1954, p. 30), who said about the disparate arts of the primitive societies that their "foreignness in form and content serves to link them together in our mind for the purposes of art criticism. The link . . . is extraneous to the works themselves. It depends upon us and our attitude to them."

Differences in form and content stem from differences in culture. The similarities within the category of primitive art lie in the similarities of the social context in which the art is produced and used. Some implications for determination of art form stemming from the social context of art are discussed below. Also, technology of art, including techniques and use of materials, has a determining effect upon form. Finally, as an aspect of form, the size of art objects yields yet another principle of comparison showing similarities within primitive art which contrast with the art of civilized societies. Actual comparison of aspects of form of the art of primitive and civilized societies will be undertaken in another paper.

Although the term "primitive" has some derogatory connotations and has to be explained and defended, it seems wrong to abandon or change the word in favor of others which are less pertinent and less accurate. The term "primitive," when used in history of art and in art criticism, is usually complimentary. Primitive art is eagerly sought today by museums and private collectors and is very highly valued. There is no question of patronizing connotation in the term. Rather, one might ask whether there has not been overly complimentary evaluation, both aesthetic and financial, of many objects originating in primitive societies.

IMPLICATIONS FOR ART IN DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PRIMITIVE AND CIVILIZED SOCIETIES

As has been proposed above, primitive art is art which is produced and used by members of primitive societies. Redfield (1953, pp. 6–14) considered as primitive those societies whose communities were small, isolated, homogeneous and intimate, where literacy was absent, where full-time specialists were lacking, where there was informal social control, and where there was strong group solidarity based upon common understandings as to the purpose of life. On the other hand, Redfield (op. cit., p. 22) held that civilization may be said to exist to the extent and degree to which, and in the respects in which a society has developed away from these characteristics of primitive society. It is the kind of society characterized by Redfield as primitive which has been taken here as an ideal model for the type of society which produces primitive art.

Three of the characteristics of primitive society cited by Redfield can be considered to be inter-related: smallness, homogeneity, and intimacy. Mere size would not have much implication for art, but the attendant homogeneity and intimacy surely do. Homogeneity

of language, of thought, and of the ways to conduct life make it certain that the artist is the same kind of social being as other members of his society. The relative lack of divisions in primitive societies insures this. Primitive artists usually are fully integrated members of homogeneous and intimate societies; our Western European artists often are marginal men—Bohemians—and as such are considerably divorced from the everyday life of other members of society.

A marked characteristic of the smallness, homogeneity and intimacy of primitive society is the lack of full-time specialists—specifically for art, the lack of full-time specialist-artists. One implication of the use of part-time artists is the relative lack of experience. A full-time artist has maximum opportunity to develop his craftsmanship—to become more deeply immersed in his art than a part-time artist. This means that a full-time artist has the opportunity to become more skilled than a part-time one; but also it may be that the full-time specialist can slip into habitual and repetitive expression in his art, while the part-time artist's work may be cruder, but fresher and more vital.

There are implications for change or lack of change in art stemming from specialization of artists. When full-time artists produce art, there is more tendency for training schools to arise—for codification of methods and techniques, which exert stabilizing influences on changes in art styles and help insure uniformity of expression. The expression of part-time artists, on the other hand, is controlled by the ideas of the broader, often the whole, adult group—not by a small and professional segment of society. Isolation of primitive societies, however, makes it less likely that alien art influences are felt, so that primitive art styles have considerable stability.

Art techniques in which complex technological processes and complicated social organization are necessary often require complex division of artistic labor. For instance, to make a bronze casting in lost wax technique it is necessary to have supplies of suitable metal, to have access to wax for the model, to have access to molding materials, to have equipment and knowledgeable assistants for the foundry operations. Large-sized sculpture, architectural sculpture and paintings, and large buildings, especially those made of durable materials, are done by professional and specialized artists and architects, who draw the plans and then often depend upon engineers, foremen and overseers and a supply of skilled and unskilled labor to carry out the execution of the designs. Organization of communication, sources of supply, and financing are also complex compared to undertakings

of similar nature (if comparable at all) in primitive societies. The informal social control of primitive societies is not adequate for the organization and sustained execution of vast enterprises such as building cathedrals, pyramids and similar great works.

The absence of literacy in primitive societies has implications for the production of art. Written canons of design and instructions for artists are features of civilized societies. But more important than lack of literate communication about art is the possibility that literacy in civilized society takes over some of the functions which art serves in primitive societies. In literate civilized societies, the books, newspapers, and written inscriptions on monuments and sign posts facilitate communication by fixing knowledge and information about objects, events, and concepts in material form so that such knowledge persists through time and can be transported across space. In primitive societies art objects accomplish some of these same functions by fixing knowledge and information in the material form of statues, paintings, and decorated objects, which also can persist through time and sometimes can travel in space. It is interesting to note here that written language, especially that known to us from monuments and other documents, often utilizes visual composition and design elements in the lettering or typography, and thus may be considered to be a specialized form of visual art.

But so far we have been discussing structural aspects of primitive society, such as small size, lack of specialization, and homogeneity—all part of what Redfield (1953, p. 21) called the technical order, ". . . that order which results from mutual usefulness, from deliberate coercion, or from the mere utilization of the same means." Less obvious, less tangible, and less amenable to investigations, but nevertheless very important as a set of determining forces for art is what Redfield (op. cit., p. 20) called the moral order: "All the binding together of men through implicit convictions as to what is right, through explicit ideals, or through similarities of conscience. The moral order is therefore always based on what is peculiarly human—sentiments, morality, conscience—and . . . arises in the groups where people are intimately associated with one another."

Civilization, Redfield stated (op. cit., p. 22), may be thought of as that society in which the relations between technical order and moral order take forms radically different from the relationships between the two in pre-civilized society. Also, he said (op. cit., p. 23) that in primitive societies the moral order is great and technical order is small, and that civilization greatly develops the technical or-

der, including formal regulations of state and church and non-moral ordering of market place behavior. Thus, as civilization develops, the earlier primitive moral order is broken or altered. A new and more inclusive moral order may then arise in the civilization.

Since in primitive society art is very much involved with religion, therefore with a generally sacred sphere of life, we look to art as being symbolic of many aspects of the sacred and moral order. Also, just as there is sharing of sentiment and conscience as to what is right in other aspects of life, so there is with respect to what is right in art.

An artist at work in a primitive society is limited by the isolation of his group, so that he is unaware of alternative styles, but he may have positive affection and sentiments toward his people's traditional style. In a situation of culture contact or other social change, conflicting sentiments and searchings of conscience arise; choice between alternatives then becomes necessary. As a result, in changing societies art styles change, different factions in art arise, some styles are distributed widely and copied, and others remain local. Thus, although sentiments and conscience of members of a given society are relatively difficult to deal with, their presence should be noted as important for study of art, in that they are factors in determination of art form. Differences in the moral order mean differences in the art.

A similarly intangible aspect of life is world view, which also is important for art. Some of the elements universally present in the world view of all peoples, Redfield said (op. cit., p. 92), are the "We–They" difference, which would include arrangements of humans on a universal stage, the "Man-not-Man" difference, including conceptions of human nature, the spatial and temporal organization of the universe, and the universal human experiences. All such elements of world view are important as subject matter for art, and thus are, in part, factors determining art form; they also provide indices with which to compare societies and art forms. Differences in world view mean differences in art.

It has been suggested here that the term "primitive art" can be used to refer to the art of certain societies which are considered to be typologically primitive. The main meaning of the dictionary definition (primitive=original or early) is not incompatible with its use by art historians to refer to an early stage of a development and is quite in accord with Redfield's primitive–civilized dichotomy. There do seem to be differences, in kind and in degree, between societies that are primitive and those that are civilized.

Since art forms, and therefore art styles, are largely determined by the nature of their socio-cultural contexts, it follows that the art of primitive and civilized societies should reflect differences in such contexts.

Redfield's scheme was developmental in that he thought that civilization develops out of, and away from, primitive society, and this suggests that the art systems comprising a total body of primitive art can have an historical dimension; thus, the world's primitive art can be defined in space and time. Let us now proceed to do just that, by surveying the world and indicating which societies produce primitive art.

THE PRIMITIVE SOCIETIES

One objection raised by Tax and Mednick against the use of the term "primitive" is that societies of considerable complexity, i.e., civilized societies, are often included in various groupings labeled "primitive." To meet this objection it is proposed that societies that are typologically civilized should be excluded from consideration as primitive societies. With respect to most of the civilized societies of the world there is no difficulty in recognizing them as such and excluding them. However, there are several areas of the world which present special problems: Africa, Nuclear America and Eurasia. What is the relationship between civilized and primitive societies in these areas?

The rise of civilization in Egypt is considered to be part of the rise of civilization in the Mediterranean basin. In Africa south of the Sahara—one of the most important source areas for primitive art—there were developments of civilization, particularly in West Africa, which demand that certain West African societies be excluded as sources of primitive art. J. D. Fage (1959) writes of "the great empires of the western Sudan," and of "the great states of the Guinea forest." He tells of the existence of various western Sudanese "empires," some Islamic, some pagan, such as ancient Ghana and Mali, Songhai and others, and also the states of the Guinea forest—Oyo, Benin, Dahomey and Ashanti. Murdock (1959, pp. 64–68) postulates for Negro Africa an indigenous invention of agriculture which occurred around the headwaters of the Niger in the western Sudan, and says: "It is probably no accident that the earliest and most complex civilizations in this part of Africa of which we possess actual historical records, . . . were exhibited by Mande-speaking peoples." The civilizations to which Murdock refers are the western Sudanese "empires" listed by Fage.

Thus, in West Africa there were groups which displayed a number of the characteristics of civilized society, such as large populations, social stratification (including kingship and slavery), formalized political, military and religious organization, urbanization, and literacy.

The relationship of present-day ethnologically known Sudanic tribes to the historically known Sudanese states is complex and not well known. All these tribes are to some degree changed from the conditions of primitive society by their contacts with such states, from interdependence due to trade, conquest, or displacement from habitat areas. The societies referred to by Fage as forest states—Ashanti, Benin, Oyo (Yoruba) and Dahomey—display similar complexities of relationship but are somewhat simpler to deal with because their periods of political ascendancy were more recent. The art of Ashanti, Dahomey, Oyo and Benin is always included in studies of African art and is often considered to be primitive art. It is extremely interesting to note that among these last-named civilized societies are found art techniques and forms that sharply contrast with other and primitive African art-producing societies. *Cire perdue* metal casting is used in all four groups and is rarely found elsewhere in Africa except in closely adjacent areas, as, for instance, among the Baule, who make brass weights for weighing gold, and among some of the tribes of the Cameroons grasslands, who do brass casting. The naturalism of the Ife bronzes and terra cottas, and of the (presumably related) Benin bronzes contrasts greatly with other African art. (This note on technique and form is not presented as evidence of civilization; rather, it anticipates comparison of art forms of primitive and civilized societies.)

On the basis of the presence of complex social organization, these several Guinea forest states and western Sudan states are classified as civilized societies, and as such are excluded from the classification of primitive. Their art is not primitive art.

In the Americas, the art of civilized societies is often included in exhibitions and collections labeled primitive art. My colleague, Donald Collier, discussed the relationship between primitive and civilized American Indian societies in the catalogue for the exhibition of Indian Art of the Americas held in 1959 at Chicago Natural History Museum. He considered the arts of the Maya, Aztec, Inca and other of the great Indian societies as being not primitive, but as "best understood and appreciated when considered on a level with the arts of the ancient Mediterranean and Oriental civilizations." Also, he referrred to the Circum-Caribbean tribes of Cen-

tral America, the Antilles and parts of Colombia and Venezuela as occupying

> . . . an intermediate position developmentally and geographically between the primitive and civilized Indian societies. . . . These farming Indians were grouped in social classes and ruled by powerful chiefs. . . . Their culture and art were strongly influenced by their civilized neighbors in Middle America and particularly by those in the northern and central Andes. . . . Unlike the primitive tribes, they produced a great variety of gold and copper ornaments by casting and other complex techniques. These metallurgical techniques as well as stylistic traits were diffused from the Andean civilizations to the Circum-Caribbean tribes in Central America during the first millennium after Christ . . . .
>
> Although it is useful to distinguish between the arts of the primitive and civilized societies in the New World, it is also important to remember that these societies were not completely isolated from one another and that they were intricately connected by historical relationships of great time-depth. As in other areas of the world, the art styles of the nuclear areas of civilization exerted powerful influences on the arts of the marginal and less developed societies. . . . (Collier, 1959).

Thus in both Africa and in the Americas the art of certain societies usually included in the realm of primitive art should be excluded on the grounds that these societies are typologically civilized. There would be little or no argument about the civilized nature of the society of some of these groups, as, for instance, Ashanti, Dahomey, Oyo, Benin, Ghana, Mali and Songhai in Africa, and Inca, Maya, and Aztec in the Americas. However, difficulties in classification arise with many other societies related to the civilized groups by association, conquest, or ancestry. In other words, we can easily classify some societies as civilized, and thus remove from the category of primitive art some styles and techniques that have seemed out of place; but with a number of societies related to, or neighbors of, centers of civilization, much more investigation is necessary to definitively establish their relationship to civilization.

With respect to Europe and Asia, I can but point to some broad and obvious matters. First, we may logically assume that primitive societies existed prior to the development of civilization. Secondly, compared to other areas of the world, there have been relatively few survivals of primitive societies in Eurasia—another way of saying that European and Asiatic civilizations have been flourishing longer and have spread more widely than civilizations in other parts of the world. This means that there are relatively few examples of primitive art from these areas. The Paleolithic cave and portable art of Europe is primitive art, and some Neolithic art may be, also. The

classification of the latter depends upon knowledge of the development of civilization in specific areas.

If these various past and present civilized societies of the world are thus excluded from consideration as originators of primitive art, which groups are left? In Africa they are the various indigenous peoples of the past and the present, including Pygmy and Bushman, and those Negro groups not involved in the developments of civilization mentioned above. In the Americas they are the various American Indian societies of North and South America not involved with the above-mentioned developments of civilization. In Oceania the primitive societies are those indigenous to Australia, Melanesia, Micronesia, Polynesia and Malaysia, in which latter area should be excluded the extensions of Asiatic civilization into Indonesia. In mainland Asia, exclusive of the Chinese and Indian civilizations, which have exerted tremendous influence, several groups may be considered as primitive societies: the various Siberian tribes, the Ainu, various central Asian nomads and some of the marginal aboriginal peoples of south China and mainland southeast Asia.

CONCLUSIONS

It has been suggested herein that art can be differentiated from non-art by the presence of elements of form whose total design emphasizes visual appeal, and by reference to the use to which the maker intended the object to be put. Art objects can be defined as artifacts that function primarily by means of appeal to the visual sense. In decorative art, the function of the object would be partly mechanical, partly visual.

Primitive art is defined as the art of societies that can be regarded as primitive by virtue of type of social organization. The term "primitive," although it carries certain invidious connotations and has some confusing aspects, is appropriate, if used to refer to an ideal type of early society and then extended to later societies of that type.

Art form has not been used in this paper as a criterion of primitiveness or civilization. Rather, the definition of art and the classification of societies as primitive and civilized are a prerequisite ordering of social contexts of art so that future comparative analysis of art form can proceed.

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